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Message Text

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64
ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10 LAB-06

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 INRE-00 PA-03 PRS-01 USIA-12

RSR-01 /064 W
---------- 020844
P R 092015 Z APR 73 ZFD
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1236
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
USCINCSO

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USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: N/ A
TAGS: ELAB, NU
SUBJECT: CONSTRUCTION WORKERS STRIKE AGAINST 60 HOUR WEEK

1. THE COMMUNIST CONTROLLED CONSTRUCTION WORKERS UNION (SCAAS) STRUCK SEVEN SITES OF NICARAGUA' S LARGEST CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, SOVIPE, ON FRIDAY, APRIL 6, DEMANDING A RETURN TO THE STANDARD 48 HOUR WORK WEEK AND REINSTATEMENT OF THE TRADITIONAL HOLY WEEK HOLIDAY. ON SATURDAY, APR 7, SOMOZA OWNED NOVEDADES CARRIED AN ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE CHAMBER OF CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES STATING THAT HOLY WEEK WOULD BE OBSERVED AND THAT THE STANDARD WORK WEEK WILL BE 56 HOURS. THIS ANNOUNCEMENT IS DATED APRIL 5.

2. THE ORIGIN OF THE STRIKE IS A JANUARY 10 LAW AUTHORIZING EARTHQUAKE AFFECTED COMPANIES TO PETITION THE LABOR MINISTER FOR PERMISSION TO WORK A SIXTY- HOUR WEEK PAYING STRAIGHT TIME. OVER TWENTY- FIVE COMPANIES, INCLUDING ALL OF THE LARGE CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES HAVE HAD THEIR SIXTY- HOUR PETITIONS APPROVED. A COMPANION DECREE REDUCED THE NUMBER OF LEGAL HOLIDAYS TO FIVE
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ELIMINATING THE TRADITIONAL FOUR DAY HOLY WEEK AS WELL AS FIVE MINOR ONE DAY HOLIDAYS.

3. AS OF MONDAY MORNING, APR 9, THE STRIKE APPEARED TO BE SPREADING AS THE WORKERS REJECT THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY' S APR 5 COMPROMISE OFFER AND CONTINUE TO DEMAND A RETURN TO TIME AND A HALF FOR ANY HOURS WORKED OVER FORTY- EIGHT.

4. COMMENT: SCAAS ENJOYS WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FROM ALL ELEMENTS OF ORGANIZED LABOR IN ITS ATTEMPT TO ROLL THE SIXTY- HOUR WEEK BACK TO THE TRADITIONAL FORTY- EIGHT. ALL OF THE COMPANIES WORKING SIXTY HOURS ARE ENJOYING GREATLY INCREASED DEMAND SINCE THE EARTHQUAKE. THE WORKERS FIND THEMSELVES BEING ASKED TO SACRIFICE OVERTIME PAY AT THE SAME TIME THEIR EMPLOYERS ARE ENJOYING GREATLY INCREASED PROFITS. CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN PARTICULAR ARE IN VERY SHORT SUPPLY AND SCAAS SEEMS CONFIDENT OF WINNING ITS DEMANDS.

THE GON HAS MADE NO OFFICIAL PRONOUNCEMENT REGARDING THE STRIKE WHICH IS ILLEGAL SINCE THE COMPLICATED LABOR CODE PROVISIONS GOVERNING STRIKES WERE NOT FOLLOWED. GIVEN THE CURRENT CONFIDENCE AND MILITANT MOOD OF THE WORKERS THE SITUATION WILL HAVE TO BE HANDLED WITH CARE, ALTHOUGH SERIOUS ONGOING LABOR PROBLEMS ARE NOT
LIKELY UNTIL AFTER HOLY WEEK.
SHELTON

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